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**Theoretical Foundations of Romanticism Research in the Art Studies of the 20<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries:  
Ukrainian Perspective**

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**Abstract**

In the globalization era characterized by the fusion of cultural traditions of different nations, there is an alternative tendency within the humanities: the increasing focus on the problem of national-stylistic specificity of the past and present artistic phenomena. Romanticism – an artistic style that dominated the European culture in the period of 19<sup>th</sup> – the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries that inspired the freedom of national spirit's expression and artists' interest in folklore and historical past of their nation is a demonstrative example of such phenomena. The article deals with the historiographical aspect of Romanticism research in the humanities (in particular, philosophical, cultural, musicology, and literature studies) basing on the works of European, American, Russian, and Ukrainian scholars of the 20<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Much attention is given to the musicological conceptions of Romanticism that are considered in the broad context of the interdisciplinary field of Romantic historiography. Moreover, the analysis and evaluation of the scientific achievements of the Ukrainian scholars that examine this topic hold a valuable place in the research's presentation. Basing on the analysis of these works, the causes of multiple interpretations of Romanticism are defined and their representatives' common grounds are specified: the consideration of Romanticism as a multidimensional category, recognition of Romanticism's national versions in different European cultures, perception of Romanticism as a dynamic system of multidirectional tendencies. Finally, the contemporary approaches in the Romanticism research are outlined.

**Keywords:** Romanticism, romantic era, romantic style, Romanticism in literature, musical Romanticism, romantic art, aesthetics of Romanticism.

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## **Introduction**

A thorough examination of cultural and art history reveals the new distinctive problems of academic research that were not clearly actualized in the previous epochs. The relevance of these problems is determined by their correspondence to the prominent social-political, economic, and social-cultural tendencies of a certain time and mental and psycho-emotional tonality of the epoch. In particular, at the present stage of globalization which is characterized by the tendency of particularism that appeared in contrast with the process of cultural integration of ethnic groups, scholars emphasized the necessity of a thorough study of national-stylistic aspects of musical phenomena.

Romanticism is regarded as one of these phenomena. It is an artistic style that occurred at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that dynamically developed alongside the national-patriotic movement of the European nations and was an embodiment of freedom of the creative individualism expression. The romantic aesthetics presented artists' will to depict the emotional side of human life from different perspectives, reconsider the history of their nation, and reveal the richness of the folklore heritage. Philosophical ideas of Romanticism, romantic imagery and stylistics that preconditioned the 19<sup>th</sup>-century artistic landscape have influenced greatly the further cultural development of various European nations, especially those that did not possess their state and nationhood struggling for the national independence (Ukrainian, Hungarian, Czech, Serbian, Slovakian, and Croatian). In these nations' art, Romanticism has evolved as a form of the national-cultural revival.

Nowadays, developing their states within the European context, these nations have a deep feeling of correspondence of their patriotic strivings to the ideas of national self-consciousness and self-identification that were formulated, interpreted, and generalized in the Romantic era.

### **Historiography of Ukrainian Romanticism Studies**

Romanticism has carried much weight in the Ukrainian culture that can be explained by its shared aesthetic traits with such peculiar features of the Ukrainian mentality as kindness, soft lyricism, respect to folklore ceremonialism, and philosophic concentration on the eternal existential problems. The most expressive manifestation of Romanticism was in the Ukrainian 19<sup>th</sup>-century music. It determined the formation of the national composers, performing, scientific and pedagogic schools and preconditioned the Ukrainian professional music's active entry into the European artistic process.

Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the problem of the Ukrainian Romanticism has been left beyond the scholarly inquiry. It is primarily explained by the categorical rejection of Romanticism by soviet researchers that considered the creative work of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century artists from the position of realism, whereas the romantic style, according to the soviet ideology, had never existed. The works of oppositional towards the totalitarian regime scholars of the 1<sup>st</sup> half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, such as D. Chyzhevskiy (1956), M. Hrushevskiy (2008), I. Malaniuk (1997), I. Sherekh (1998) and V. Zen'kovskii (2005) were singular exceptions that recognized the romantic features of the Ukrainian history and literature in the 19<sup>th</sup> – the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The destiny of these scholars was dramatic: M. Hrushevskiy died suddenly under the unclear circumstances in 1934, whereas the rest of the researchers continued their scientific work in exile. A similar situation was peculiar to the music studies of that time. A respectable composer, scholar, and folklorist S. Liudkevych (1999) was among the very few who acknowledged Romanticism in the Ukrainian music. In particular, he considered a founder of the Ukrainian professional music M. Lysenko to be "typical Ukrainian national romanticist" (Liudkevych, 1999, p.292). In addition to that, particular aspects of Romanticism in music were examined at that time by the prominent Ukrainian-born musical theorist B. Yavorskii (1987) who worked at Moscow Music Conservatory.

The investigation of Ukrainian Romanticism became more intense only in 1991 after the Ukrainian declaration of independence. At the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the findings devoted to the

different aspects of the Ukrainian Romanticism appeared. The philosophical aspects of this phenomenon have been examined by M. Palasiuk (2001), aesthetical – by T. Bovsunivska (1997), literature – by M. Naienko (2000), culturological – by I. Iudkin-Ripun (2001), musicological – by L. Kyianovska (2000) and L. Kornii (2001). These scholars are gradually reviving the forgotten romanticists' names and artworks of the 19<sup>th</sup> – the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and little known works of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century art theorists that were silenced in the totalitarian state.

### **Proposition and Research Methodology**

Despite the particular progress in the Ukrainian Romanticism investigation, the academic discourse lacks interdisciplinary works devoted to the examination of this phenomenon and integrated consideration of Ukrainian Romanticism in the context of the European studies. It is thought to be reasonable and significant to create an integral historiographical map of Romanticism incorporating this phenomenon research experience in different countries, including Ukraine. Therefore, the article is aimed to widen theoretical frameworks of the Romanticism research and actualize the conceptions and ideas of the 20<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup>-centuries Ukrainian scholars. This approach is an attempt to enrich the world's scholarly discourse of Romanticism as a multinational artistic system and consider the phenomenon of the Ukrainian Romanticism as an essential component of the European romantic style.

The methodology of the research presupposes the following methods: historical – in the analysis of the processes of formation and evolution of Romanticism in the European and Ukrainian art of the 19<sup>th</sup> – the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; historical-cultural – in the consideration of the conceptual foundations of the Romantic epoch universal cultural and socio-historical context; descriptive – in the analysis of the terminology and Romanticism notion interpretation; historical-comparative – in the comparison of different manifestations of Romanticism in the 19<sup>th</sup> – the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; the method of modeling – in the stylistic model construction of Romanticism of the particular period; typological – in the definition of the Romantic style most peculiar features.

### **The Problem of Romanticism Definition**

Romanticism is one of the most mysterious and inexhaustible phenomena in the history of culture that has been capturing scholars' attention for more than two centuries. The phenomenon of Romanticism has been investigated in the humanities through the lens of the philosophical, historical, social, and aesthetical aspects. The consideration of the range of scholarly writings that belong to different generations and national cultures has shown the numerous distinctions concerning the Romanticism definition. Indeed, the question of what Romanticism is has remained unanswered for the last two centuries. So as to be convinced of this, it is enough to put in a row an artistic comparison of Romanticism with the ghost, suggested by poet P. Vyazemskii (1984) in the 1820-s, and ideas of A. Mikhailov (1991), a literature theorist of the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: "A word that expresses the most diverse intangibility in nature and art and possesses almost an imperceptible meaning because it shines with innumerable shades of meaning" (p.20). K. Zenkin (2001), a contemporary musicologist, supports this position and compares Romanticism to the "enormous continent or ocean that always keeps its secrets no matter how long it is studied" (p.9).

An essential difference between the definitions of Romanticism can be seen in the works of theorists of literature and musicologists. This difference can be explained by appealing to the historical reasons and the specificity of these kinds of art. An occurrence of Romanticism in literature emphasized a cult of art that took roots in life itself and national-historical foundations and embodied artist's free self-expression. Romanticism in literature appeared to be a challenge to the normativity and rationalism peculiar to the Classicism artistic reasoning. Here-hence – an emphasis on the essential role of subjective, emotional, and sensual basis by romantic poets. The flourishing of Romanticism in

literature was bright but fragile: it took place in the first quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Therefore, theorists of literature considered this phenomenon as an artistic branch for a long time.

However, within such an emotional art as music, Romanticism could not become a discovery of freedom and sensuousness as it happened in literature. Therefore, it was not a categorical rejection of the classicist ideals. In this context, a musicologist A. Tsuker (1998) expressed an idea of music “pan-romanticism” that is characterized by the “method of the artistic modeling of life” (p.9) peculiar to Romanticism. According to this scholar, the aesthetics of this art is intrinsically romantic and it appeared before the Romantic pieces of art. Thus, unlike literature, Romanticism in music has dominated longer and overstepped the boundaries of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This idea can be a persuasive argument to perceive Romanticism in music as an integral artistic-historical epoch.

### **The National Aspect of Romanticism**

Another significant aspect of the Romanticism definition problem is connected with different time and character of its manifestation in distinct countries and national cultures. This has led to the idea of Romanticism inner stratification, which caused academic discussion concerning the understanding of this phenomenon as an integral epochal system. For instance, V. Zen'kovskii (2005) claimed that “Romanticism always has a national coloring, there is no Romanticism as an abstract notion, but there is German, French, and English Romanticism that are all different” (p.156). A similar position belongs to D. Chyzhevskiy (1956): “A scholarly definition of Romanticism is difficult to formulate because a romantic literature has taken on various forms throughout several decades and in different cultures, and its particular representatives differed from each other in some aspects” (p.376). A musicologist F. Blume (2004) shared this reasoning noticing that “contradictions and distinctions in the music of the ‘romantic age’ seem to be great even if to consider only a German music, and become incomprehensible if to integrate the music of other nations” (pp.147-148). These differences challenge musical theorists to define the essence of Romanticism as a phenomenon.

At the same time, the multiplicity of the national embodiments of Romanticism is basically its characteristic feature. An idea of the national uniqueness of art, proclaimed by J. Herder in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, was essential to the aesthetics of that period. Not coincidentally in that particular epoch, the formation and flourishing of many national cultures was happening. In this context, a thought of an American 19<sup>th</sup>-century writer J.R. Lowell (1896) is relevant: “Without national self-awareness, we would never have literature” (p.223). I. Malaniuk's (1997) quote maintains this idea: “There is no culture without routes, genetic line and face, of course national. There is no non-national culture” (pp.20-21). Therefore, the major characteristic of the Romantic style is the individuality and originality of the artistic reasoning that was revealed through the national specificity of the creative work in the most vivid and convincing way.

The recognition of the uniqueness of every national culture by the romanticists has formed an understanding of the necessity of all nations' consolidation on the basis of the universal human values. This idea was mentioned in different periods by the Romanticist artists as well as the researchers of their creative work. A philosopher N. Berdyaev (1990) stated his opinion about the meaning of the category of the national in the universal terms: “The national and universal in culture cannot be contrasted. The universal is revealed through the national genius that reaches the universal through its individuality” (p.96). A similar thought was expressed by a literature theorist N. Berkovskii (2002): “All European countries possess their own Romanticism. However, if to consider them from a distance, they are fused” (p.33). This idea actualized by Romanticists is peculiar to the contemporary social-cultural realm shaped by the controversial tendencies of globalization and glocalization that demonstrates the relevance of the discussed issue.

### **Semantic Dimensions of the Concept of Romanticism**

The art theorists of different generations have recognized that Romanticism cannot be defined only by its historical borders. I. Malaniuk (1997) has written on this subject: "Romanticism lives in the Medieval Ages and Renaissance. It sensitively guards a human being and a community, not in the mechanized and degraded meaning of these notions in the last century" (p.144). In half-century, this thought was developed by A. Mikhailov (1991), who concluded that "Romanticism is almost unperceivable in the width of its artistic solutions" (p.23) and admitted the presence of its features in art of not only 19<sup>th</sup> century but also ancient epochs and the 20<sup>th</sup> century too. A modern literature theorist M. Naienko (2000) agrees to this idea. According to his conception, the category of Romanticism has three dimensions of meaning in literature: as an art movement, artistic style, and stylistic tonality. The first covers the literature of the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the second presupposes a creative work of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century romanticists and their followers, whereas the third – an art of all epochs: from folklore to the newest forms of professional creativity (Naienko, 2000).

The idea of three-dimensionality of Romanticism has formed the basis of A. Kudryashov's (2010) research, who has expressed the essence of the musical Romanticism in a chain of related words – "romantic" – "romance" – "romanticism". According to the scholar's definition, "romantic" is a historical-typological category that is an antonym to the classicist art. The term "romance", in his opinion, reveals a tendency of the freedom of expression and is peculiar to art of difference epochs, whereas "romanticism" – a period of the 19<sup>th</sup> century" (Kudryashov, 2010, p.227).

The similarities of both scholars' conceptions are quite evident: the understanding of Romanticism as an artistic movement in M. Naienko's (2000) writing corresponds to the notion of the romantic in A. Kudryashov's (2010) work, as well as the literature theorist's definition of the artistic style relates to the definition of Romanticism by this musicologist, whereas the notion of the stylistic tonality is close to the "romance". This contingency reveals the fact that the scholarly research of the literature studies and musicology are allied at the present time.

The distinct meaning of "Romanticism" and "romance" notions is emphasized in the cultural studies of I. Ludkin-Ripun (2001). Different cultural problems of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century epoch related to the artistic synthesis, subjectivism, social conflicts, psychology, economics, development of the natural sciences, and technique are problematized in his work. Thus, the term "romance" has a broad meaning in his conception: as a style of the entire epoch, as a lifestyle of this epoch, as a personal character, way of action, and even attitude towards these actions. Romanticism is defined by this scholar as a thinking style that captures not only art but also all expressions of human mind. In this context, I. Ludkin-Ripun (2001) develops N. Berkovsky's (2002) idea who distinguishes Romanticism in different public spheres, even in medicine as a specific method of treatment – hypnosis that came into the medical practice in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Taking into account these ideas, it is reasonable to argue that Romanticism has covered all cultural fields, including liberal arts and sciences.

### **The Chronological Framework of Musical Romanticism**

An appeal to the musicological experience of the Romanticism research determines the main tendency that is the Romanticism definition as a musical-historical epoch and as its style. In particular, such prominent figures of the European musicological thought of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as A. Einstein (1947), C. Dahlhaus (1989), B. Yavorskii (1987), and M. Mikhailov (1990) have written about the epoch of Romanticism in music. However, there are different interpretations of musical Romanticism as an epoch that can be traced in the history of musicology. For instance, F. Blume (2004), who defined the integration of the classicist and romanticist principles of the musical thinking, suggested a conception of the "classical-romantic epoch" bringing into question self-sufficiency of the musical Romanticism. P. Lang (1941) did not bring apart Classicism and Romanticism as distinct epochs as well.

Due to the conventionality of any historical period measurement, it is almost impossible to define the chronological framework of musical Romanticism. Therefore, some scholars consider the connection of the Romanticism formation with the creative work of F. Schubert and K.M. Weber, some – with the names of E.T. Gofman, L. Shpor and N. Paganini, whereas other researchers seek for the origins of the romantic style in the works of J. Schobert, and L. Beethoven. A contemporary musical theorist R. Taruskin (2005) discovers Romantic features even in W.A. Mozart's musical heritage. Thus, the starting point of Romanticism in different works is volatile between the last quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

In the matter of the definition of the Romanticism era passing the musical theorists lean towards the mark of the twenties of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As K. Zenkin (2001) puts it, the end of Romanticism is connected with the late-romantic tonality overflow in the creative work of C. Debussy, A. Webern, S. Prokofiev, B. Bartok, when “the freedom of the music space-time organization aspired by the romanticists has become a reality” (p.15). This idea is shared by the contemporary Western musicologists R. Taruskin (2005), S. Pederson (2014), and H. Pauls (2014). In particular, H. Pauls (2014) considers Romanticism to be a stylistic keynote of the 20<sup>th</sup> century despite the anti-romantic waves of avant-gardism that were peculiar to music during that time period.

The understanding of Romanticism as an integrated epoch is demonstrated by musicologists who consider the complexity of the fixed features that are representative of the art of this epoch and define Romanticism as a stylistic art system. Basing on the wide musicological experience, it is possible to generalize these features: a sense of discordance and attempt to “escape” from it to the ideal world; individualization of the artistic thinking; emotionality of the musical piece; primacy of lyrics; interest to folklore; preference to open forms; tendency to small forms; attention to other national cultures; descriptivism; vivid cantilena melodic; coloristic harmony.

Two approaches can be distinguished in the history of the research of the Romantic era in music. The first chronological approach presupposes a consideration of the composers' creative work of a particular time period. In this context, the analyzed epoch is primarily divided into 3 periods: early, mature and late Romanticism. K. Weber, F. Schubert, F. Mendelsohn, M. Glinka are relegated to the early romanticists. The notion of mature Romanticism is related to the creativity of H. Berlioz, F. Chopin, R. Schuman, F. List, P. Tchaikovsky, whereas R. Wagner, J. Brahms, G. Mahler, C. Debussy, A. Scriabin, and S. Rachmaninoff are thought to be the representatives of late Romanticism.

Another approach is shaped by its followers' striving to comprehend a musical phenomenon in its stylistic dynamics that is defined not by its chronological units but by the attributes of the evolutionary movement quality – phases, stages and cycles. B. Yavorskii (1987) was among the first to take this position. He defined Romanticism as a culmination phase of the “emotional” era. At the present time, the conception of stage development formulated by B. Yavosrkii is being developed in the works of R. Taruskin (2005), K. Zenkin (2019), L. Kornii (2001), and H. Pauls (2014) dedicated to the problem of Romanticism. The following common ideas can be seen in these studies:

- triplicity of Romanticism evolutionary development (establishment of style, development of stylistic features and their modification);

- repeatability of the musical-historical process caused by the alternation logic of the controversial tendencies.

### **Conclusion**

Basing on the examination of works in art studies written by European, American, Russian, and Ukrainian scholars of the 20<sup>th</sup>–21<sup>st</sup> centuries and devoted to the issues of Romanticism, it appears that the variety of its interpretations can be observed throughout its existence and research: from its first

metaphorical definitions in the works of artists and the 19<sup>th</sup>-century thinkers to the modern theoretical conceptions. The numerous scholars' attempts to define the formula of Romanticism turned out to be vain because every time its main feature was considered through the different lens (worldview, aesthetical, psychological, stylistically, etc.) and consequentially, the essence of Romanticism was characterized with the help of different conceptual frameworks. Such theoretical controversies occurred due to the inhomogeneity and asynchrony of the Romanticism' manifestations in the cultural-artistic and geographical space: it had distinct connotations, chronological frameworks, and development rate in different kinds of art and national cultures. The analysis of the scholarly literature ensured the consideration and systematization of the theoretical foundations of the Romanticism investigation. The most spread interpretations of this phenomenon in the art studies are the following: Art movement; Artistic style; Creative method; Artistic era; Specific kind of creativity.

It appeared that scholars did not move beyond the univocal definitions of this phenomenon. For instance, a culture theorist V. Vanslov (1966) perceived it as both creative method and movement, a musicologist M. Mykhailov (1990) considered the Romanticism as a method and style of an epoch, whereas a literature theorist M. Naienko (2000) – as a movement, artistic style and a peculiar kind of creativity.

At the same time, there are many similar positions within the musical studies:

- understanding of Romanticism as a multidimensional category;
- recognition of Romanticism's national versions in different European cultures;
- perception of Romanticism as a dynamic system of multidirectional tendencies.

According to the contemporary art theorists, the research of the complex issue of Romanticism presupposes a combination of its synchronic and diachronic dimensions and consideration of the originality of the Romanticism's representation in every national culture.

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